

REMARKS

Claims 1-18 and 21 are all the claims pending in the application. Claims 19 and 20 are canceled by way of this Amendment.

I. IDS Status:

The Examiner has returned the initialed Form PTO/SB/08 filed with the Information Disclosure Statement on July 24, 2006. However, the Examiner has **failed to initial** any of the U.S. Patents and Publications listed on the form. **Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner return a completely initialed copy of the SB08 Form with the next Office Paper.**

II. Drawing Objections:

The Examiner has indicated acceptance of the drawing figures filed on July 24, 2006. However, the Examiner has also indicated that the drawings are objected to because the “rib(s) for causing the holes of a closable part” must be shown in the figures or the feature(s) canceled from the claim(s).

In response to the Examiner’s objections, Applicants cancel claims 19 and 20.

III. Claim Rejections under § 112

Claims 3, 4, and 16-21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph.

Applicants amend the claims to remove any ambiguities, including the change in the phrase “open portions” to –cover portions--.

IV. Prior Art Rejections:

Claims 1, 2, 4-6, 10, 13-18 and 21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Fohl (4,828,286).

Claims 6, 7 and 9-14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Hauer (6,695,344).

Claim 3 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Fohl (4,828,286) in view of Hauer (6,695,344).

Claim 8 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hauer (6,695,344) in view of Nishijima et al. (6,024,147).

Claims 16 and 19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hauer (6,695,344) in view of Fohl (4,828,286).

Claim 20 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hauer (6,695,344) and Fohl (4,828,286), and further in view of Nagata (5,647,610).

Analysis

Claims 1, 6, 10 and 16 are the only claims in independent form; therefore, the following discussion is initially directed to these independent claims.

Claim 1:

Claim 1 is rejected as allegedly being anticipated by Fohl.

Claim 1 is amended to clarify the novel structure of the airbag cover. As discussed in the Abstract and other portions of the pending specification, the airbag has a central concave part that indents toward the interior of a bowl shaped airbag cover. The airbag cover has tear lines formed between the plurality of cover pieces which facilitate the opening of the airbag cover at the time of expansion of the airbag, and wherein the cover pieces each have an attachment piece respectively fixed to a plurality of plastic deformable attachment parts provided on the base plate

and the cover pieces are completely separated and opened outward owing to the expansion of the airbag (see paragraphs [0032-0034]).

Fohl fails to teach or suggest:

- An airbag cover having a bowl shape and a concave part at the center of the cover so as to indent a bottom portion of the bowl shape toward an interior of the bowl shape;
- Tear lines formed between a plurality of cover pieces which facilitate the opening of the airbag cover so that the cover pieces are completely separated and opened.

Fohl discloses a cover 38 formed in a shape which matches the support plate 30, both being of rectangular design. Although there is a slight domed shape to the cover 38, it is clearly not in a bowl shape in which a central concave part indents a bottom portion of the bowl toward an interior of the bowl. Rather, the central part 54 (foam plug) in Fohl is shown as flush with the outer surface of the cover 38 (FIG. 4), and thus, is not concave.

Further, Fohl does not disclose tear lines formed in the manner of the present invention. The only apparent tear lines in Fohl are formed in the H-shape shown in FIGS. 5 and 6. There is no tear line similar to the present invention so that the cover pieces can be completely separated.

The remaining cited references fail to remedy this deficiency of Fohl. Namely, none of the references teaches or suggests an airbag cover having the unique structure of the present invention.

Nishijima discloses a central portion 31a as flush with the cover 31 (FIG. 2). There is no central concave part that indents. This reference also fails to disclose tear lines formed in the manner of the present invention.

Hauer is similar to Fohl in that a separate piece 38 is provided at a central portion of the cover 9. There is no teaching or suggestion of a tear line between the ring 32 and the center piece 38, nor tear lines radiating outward therefrom.

Nagata suffers from similar deficiencies and thus fails to teach one of ordinary skill in the art to modify Fohl to arrive at the claimed invention. Namely, this reference also fails to disclose the novel bowl shape having a central concave part and the tear lines formed in the recited manner.

In view of the foregoing, the cited references, whether taken alone or in combination, fail to arrive at the invention according to amended claim 1.

Claim 6:

Claim 6 is rejected as being anticipated by Fohl, however, Fohl fails to teach or suggest each and every feature of claim 6.

Namely, Fohl fails to disclose an alleged cushion plate (30) for clamping and holding the airbag (34) between itself (30) and the alleged base plate (10). The airbag is not held between the alleged cushion plate (30) and base plate (10). See FIG. 1.

Moreover, the central portion (54) is not opened by tear lines. The cover 38 merely has a circular opening (see FIGS. 5 and 6) for holding a foam plug 54.

Claim 6 is also rejected as being anticipated by Hauer. However, Hauer fails to disclose that the alleged central portion 38 is opened by tear lines. There are no tear lines provided around the central portion as this portion is a completely separate piece from the airbag cover. The only tear lines are provided at the outer edge at 34.

In view of the foregoing, claim 6 is not anticipated by the cited references.

Claim 10:

Applicants amend claim 10 to clarify the novel features of the airbag and the interaction of the cylindrical part with the fixed part of the cover.

Claim 10 includes, *inter alia*, the airbag (40) having a cylindrical part (46) which is restrained by the fixed part at the time of expansion of the airbag so as to be expandable forward across the fixed part and wherein the fixed part of the airbag cover has a concave part (52) for guiding the airbag when it spreads. A tip side opening part (46a) of the cylindrical part is held by the concave part of the airbag cover so as not to come out. This function is achieved by an opening diameter of the tip side opening part that is formed smaller than the maximum outer diameter of the concave part. See FIG. 18, for example.

Claim 10 is rejected as being anticipated by Fohl. Fohl does not actually disclose a concave part for the airbag cover 38. Moreover, the airbag 34 does not have a cylindrical part held by a concave part of the cover 38, nor a tip side opening part thereof with a smaller maximum outer diameter than a concave part of the cover 38. In summary, Fohl does not disclose the novel airbag structure and the airbag's physical constraint to a concave part of an airbag cover.

Claim 10 is also rejected as being anticipated by Hauer. Hauer does not disclose that a concave part of the airbag cover restrains the airbag. More specifically, there is no teaching or suggestion of the relative diametrical relationship of a cylindrical part of an airbag and a concave part of the cover.

In view of the foregoing, neither Fohl nor Hauer teaches or suggests, either alone or together, the claimed invention according to amended claim 10.

Moreover, the remaining cited references fail to remedy the deficiencies of Fohl and/or Hauer.

Claim 16:

Claim 16 is amended to more clearly recite the opening hole part of the airbag. In particular, the airbag has an opening hole part formed by aligning at least two pieces of base cloths with each other, each piece of base cloth having hole parts displaced in position from each other, and the concave part guides the hole parts of the opening hole part when the airbag is expanded so as to cause the hole parts to change in positional relationship with each other.

Fohl and Hauer do not teach or suggest this feature. Fohl does not teach or suggest the opening hole part of the present invention. Moreover, this reference does not disclose a concave part that is capable of guiding the airbag nor such opening holes with respect to each other. Hauer also fails to teach or suggest this feature. Hauer completely fails to mention the use of such opening hole parts.

Thus, the combination of the two references fails to arrive at amended claim 16 since the combination of references fails to teach or suggest the opening hole part structure and the capability of a concave part to cause the hole parts to change in position with respect to each other.

Dependent Claims:

The remaining rejections are directed to the dependent claims. These claims are patentable for at least the same reasons as the independent claims by virtue of their dependency therefrom.

AMENDMENT UNDER 37 C.F.R. § 1.111
Application No.: 10/587,021

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Conclusion

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

/Ellen R. Smith/

SUGHRUE MION, PLLC
Telephone: (202) 293-7060
Facsimile: (202) 293-7860

Ellen R. Smith
Registration No. 43,042

WASHINGTON OFFICE

23373

CUSTOMER NUMBER

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